THE FEDERATION ARCHIVES
Letterzine of The Lost Seska
A BLAKES 7 Information Condominium
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I want to thank all of you who came through with renewals in record time. And especially those - many - of you who donated over and above the new amount. Wow! It does an old fan heart good 'cause after 5 years, a fan gets tired and starts looking for greener grass. But the fans keep me going by giving me snuggle bunnies.

I opted for a "smaller" FA than I had originally planned because I wished to get it to the membership ASAP. There are things afoot in the fandom that need to be addressed immediately.

You could say that the Shit Has Hit The Fandom.

In printing the following, with an attendant editorial, I am breaking my own rules and taking sides and it certainly *borders* on personal attack. However, it's a defense of FANDOM - which IS being attacked!

Somebody out there has gotten it into their head that they can and will "control" this fandom; that we will ask "How High?" when they say JUMP!

They are so WRONG!

There is no name attached to this right now for some very solid reasons, believe me.

"What follows is purely a personal statement. It does not necessarily reflect the views and attitudes of whoever might have printed it, distributed it, etc.

Have you ever attended a "fan" convention? Have you ever attended a "pro" (e.g. CREATIONS) convention? Do you know the difference? Because there are a world of differences.

Fan conventions, by their very nature, are run solely for the benefit of the fans and usually donate any profits made to charities (and, in the case of B7, the chosen charity is often a local PBS station which shows B7). The committee and staff of these conventions donate their time, their skills, their hard work, and quite often their money to support the endeavor. The only compensation they receive is the pleasure of attending the convention (where they work some more ... and often even have to pay for their membership!). Virtually none of the committee's or worker's expenses are paid by the convention but come rather out of their own pockets.

At fan conventions, there is usually a video room where various fannish videos, TV series, and movies are shown for the enjoyment of all; a dealers' room where professional dealers and fan dealers alike sell merchandise such as zines, buttons, posters, pictures, etc.; a convention suite where fans can gather to talk, socialize, often share refreshments, etc.; caption contests; costume contests; fan cabarets or shows where skits, parodies, etc. are performed; fan panels where fans get together and discuss certain aspects of their favorite fandom, etc; banquet get-tegethers where fans can again socialize; sometimes even group outings to see the premiere of a movie or something similar; blood drives; and all manner of other activities. The key thing to pay attention to here is that everything centers around and is done for the benefit of the *fans*.

In recent years, fan cons have sprung up which focus on the actors of B7 rather than on purely fannish activities. Because of the high cost of bringing the actors over from England (and it's only going up and up with the declining dollar), membership fees correspondingly had to go up. But, the actors were so charming and so willing to mingle with the fans (in other words, so lacking an American "star" attitude) that everyone was willing to pay more to see them. The actors took note of this.

Fannish activities at cons dropped off as the committees were forced to spend more and more time and money on keeping the guests satisfied. It became a CATCH-22: the fans wanted to see the guests so the guests had to be kept happy; but in order to keep the guests happy, the fans' needs began to be ignored.

Then the "Pro" cons stepped in. These cons are run for no other reason than profit. There are few fannish activities at them. There is usually a video room; a dealers' room (where you are expected to spend yet more money - you will see few fannish dealers here as the tables cost in the hundreds of the dollars); and you get to see an actor talk for one hour on stage. Afterwards, you can stand in line for an autograph. That's it. If you want more, you can come back the next day, pay to get in again, and see the actor for another hour.

But it's great for the guests: they hardly have to work at all and they get paid a *fee*

So the fan cons had to start paying many actors a fee (there are a few of them who haven't lost their Idealism in this area yet) PLUS expenses or the actors wouldn't come. Why should they? They could go to a pro con, do very little work, and make money. They also began to demand business-class or first-class airfare (a difference of about $2,000.00 in price from coach from England). And never mind that every extra penny spent on their demands is a penny taken away from dying children or other worthwhile charities. Never mind that the fans are willing to scrape up the money somehow by contributing to guest funds - that's still not enough. Which tells you about how much respect these actors actually have for the fans. Many of these actors who used to pontificate about how they considered the fans their "friends" are now copping a "star" attitude. How dare we not bankrupt ourselves to obtain their sterling presence? After all, they're *worth* it and screw the charity (and the fans who worked for a year to put on the con, for matter). Ever wonder why certain actors never appear at SCORPIO anymore, even though the SCORPIO people *were mostly responsible* for promoting B7 in the USA? There's your real answer. SCORPIO doesn't pay the actors a *fee, you see*. And the worst part of it is all that many of the concommittees of these fan conventions are being blamed for "keeping the guests away from the fans." I have served on the committee for two major B7 cons last year; I am on the committee for three in the upcoming year. I am acquainted with most of the organizers of the other major cons across the country - and I'm very sorry to have to tell you that the committees in question rarely try to keep a guest "away from the fans". They are rarely able to control the guests at all. The truth is, the actors no longer *want* to mingle with the fans. They just want to make a buck.

At a recent CREATIONS Con, a well known B7 actor, who certainly used to be a "friend" to the fans, was heard to say that he was "doing as little as necessary" at the Con. As he entered a brunch, he said, "I've only got to spend 75 seconds with each fan. I worked it out. That's all I'm getting paid for."

This same actor has been telling people that he intends to start up a series of "pro" cons in direct competition with CREATIONS. There are other people involved in this venture, most notably a financial backer who once ran a "fan" con of her own. Their aim is to (and here I quote) "put the fans cons out of business" and "control fannish literature." (!) The cities they are considering for these cons are: Ft. Lauderdale (where OMNICON, a fan con, is held); Chicago (where SCORPIO, *the* major fan run British media con is held); Houston (where REBELLION - and previously DESTINY - is held); San Francisco (where ORAC is held); Newark, NJ (where GAMBIT - and previously DSV - is held); and I believe St. Louis (where TARDISCON was held). Dallas (where STAR ONE was held last year) and ORLANDO were also mentioned as "possible" sites (*the people in ORLANDO put on OASIS in the spring and they are working toward getting World Con in 1992*). Many people of my acquaintance who are involved in running the fan cons in these cities have already been approached about helping to run the "new" Cons. In other words, these new organizers want the fans to help (free of charge, of course) put themselve out of business!!! To their credit, most of the people approached that I am aware of have said either "No" or that they'd only work for a fee (after all, it's a profit-making venture, not a charitable one, so why should they *donate* their time, money and expertise to line the actors' pockets??)

Now, to the matter of "control". The organizers of these cons are going to supposedly assemble their "own stable" of approved artists. Only these artists will be allowed to exhibit at the cons. And the artists will be charged a 50% commission for this privilege. They want to put together their "own stable" of fan writers and only these writers' work will be allowed to be sold (I'm assuming in the zines). The Cons will feature different "events" at each venue, too, so that if you want to see everything, you will have to attend all of them across the country. One of the actors involved was so kind as to point out that he is well aware that there are fans who "follow him around". This same actor also intends to refuse to attend any other cons so if you want to see *him*, you will have to come to his con and allow yourself to be controlled and ripped off. He also claims (I have no idea if this part is true) that he can guarantee two other actors for his cons because they are friends of his and they will "do what he tells them".

Well, it looks like the day of the guest-oriented conventions is coming to an ignoble end, my friends, because I don't know about you, but I'm not going to sit still for this. I won't be controlled; I won't be taken advantage of; I won't allow the fans to be ripped off; I won't work for free for a non-charitable con; I won't line a greedy actor's pockets, no matter how charming he is; I won't travel cross-country just to see an actor for a few minutes on a stage when I can see him for free on my VCR (this actor who thinks people follow *him* around obviously never considered the fact that a lot of us attend cons to get together with our *friends* in other parts of the country); in short, I *will* fight this attempt at a hostile "Federation" takover. It's a free country and anybody who wants to can contribute to my zines, whether they're part of an "approved" stable or not!

I think it's time to get back to the affordable, fan-oriented, *fan* conventions. We can have conventions without a single "guest" in attendance. MediaWest and others do it every year. The committee and the fan attendees are the *only* indispensable components here. I am adopting a new motto: He's expendable; he's stupid; and he's *going*.

You think about it.

*My sources of information for all of the above were: the actor involved; some of the people involved in backing the proposed conventions; some of the people who have been approached to run the conventions.

I know for myself, I rarely attend a Con that I don't work at somehow and I rarely put in less than 12 to 15 hour days. And an out of state Con costs ME upwards of $500 and more when you add up airfare, hotel, food, travel and, for me, at least 10 rolls of film and processing.

And I've personally known more than one Fan Con that went into debt to pay the Guests - houses mortgaged, parents hit for loans, personal property sold, etc.

As for keeping the guests away: hell, I've been on Staff and hardly seen the Guests! Except through a camera lens while on the job.

Now for you who may have read the preceeding with a cynical eye and are thinking it just the rattlings of a disgruntled fan, let me tell you a tale of my DOCTOR WHO fan days:

Once Upon A Time, way back in the Olden Days of DOCTOR WHO fandom, there was a trog named Barbara Elder who was licensed by the BBC as a kind of overseer of merchandise at the Cons - she took this as permission for a Power Trip, cursing out dealers and fans alike. In effect, she was nothing more than a snitch for the BBC.

She then attempted to "control" fan writing and the zines by virtually demanding all zines clear all their contents through her, before publication. This precipitated a battle of idealologies between her and Jean Airey, who refused to "go along" with it on monatary and constitutional grounds. I know, I was literally in the middle of it as she and Elder debated to the right and left of me. However, I was a nobody rank and file fan then (early 1983), so I didn't count except when Elder would turn to me and ask if she wasn't right. I remained noncommittal 'cause I didn't then see it as "my place" to say anything to these two who were even then BNFs. (However, I totally agreed with Jean).

Generally, fans ignored Elder. She then tried to "control" DW fans via controlling Tom Baker and putting on a series of Tom Cons which ignored all the other DW actors. Fans countered by putting on their own multi-Doctor oriented Cons and ignoring Tom since he was by then asking $10,000 to $15,000 plus expenses.

Elder later had her license pulled. She's history.

Then we got "Spirit Of Light" - Rubenstein/Ettingers and Co.

I had a de facto role in their organization so I was privvy to a lot of the crap that went on in their private meetings - and the utter CONTEMPT with which they viewed the fans, and even the actors. It was a money-making scheme, pure and simple. Fans were viewed as so many wallets, period. (Which is why I have a bad taste for CREATIONS).

Anywho, SOL's game plan was to be: controlling the cons by controlling the access to the Guests. Having a "stable" of selected guests, with set, substantial fees - rarely less than $3000 PLUS expenses.

Fans were going to have to go to SOL for Guests. If they didn't, well, they were going to find that certain Guests were suddenly "unavailable" unless a higher fee was paid.

"Maverick" Cons (especially DWFCA. CREATIONS rarely ever did DW Cons and still do not. CREATIONS is a 25 year old comic Con and makes their money on their dealers' room) would find a large SOL con scheduled near or even opposite theirs

This was attempted - their last gesture was the Dueling Baker Tour which took place a very few weeks before Schiano's ill-fated Pertwee Tour, which became the infamous "Tour of Duty" with Darrow and Keating - and just happened to often be in the same cities Ralph had booked. I spent that summer telling him that was exactly what would happen and to stay out of the NE because it was saturated. Go to the South, Midwest and West which were starved for DW Cons.

You can only dip into the same Fan Pool so often before Fans become 1. jaded, 2. bored, 3. broke. Jaded occurs first. But what did I know? I was "only" a fan.

SOL did get off the ground a series of MEGA Con tours which sapped the same areas of enthusiasm and money.

Even the Duel Baker Tour failed because of reciprocity failure and lack of proper PR - i.e. spending money on same and NOT relying strictly on local clubs who don't have the time, expertise or FUNDS to do it right

I ended up being the Pertwee Tour's PR for the entire SE. I spent over $500 in phone calls and postage which I'll never see again.

However, SOL's blatent contempt for fans gradually put off the fandom which began to back off in droves, which is how B7 got many of its first "converts".

Also, the guests decided that THEY would decide which Cons they'd attend. Unfortunately, they didn't lower their fees accordingly. Originally, few of them charged fees at all or only minimal.

Concentrated, one-focus Cons, gave them all the idea that they were The Word in fandom; they would tell the Fandom how to move and when and where.

I've seen fandom roll over some really "big" people (or ones who thought they were) and barely leave a smudge.

When S.O.L. et al lost the SMOFS and BNFs, they cut their own throat.

I would sincerely advise future B7 Cons to open up a bit to British Media and look beyond just B7. I mean for $5000 PLUS expenses you could get someone like Jeremy Brett or Rowan Atkinson. REAL "names", known beyond B7.

But isn't it curious though that there is never any talk of soaking the BRITISH fans? Only the generous, hard-working, loving RICH AMERICANS. Again.

After basking for nearly four years in our hard work and generosity, suddenly certain actors can't see past AMERICAN wallets. Are we so many dollar signs?

Furthermore, prominently mentioned were Zines and fan writing. "Controlling" same via the Cons (I guess he never heard of mail order).

Paramount, Lucas & Spielburg and the BBC all attempted to "do" something about fan writing/zines. They were 1. ignored and 2. laughed at and, 3. the zines went "underground".

And the "Powers" gave up.

I can't emphasize enough the attitude of raw CONTEMPT and cynicism and "take the rich Americans" of which this bespeaks.

I had to watch and suffer in silence when this happened in DW fandom. I knew what was happening then, knew what was coming, but no one would listen to me.

But if this fandom is to be sent reeling, I will always come down on the side of the FANS. They came first. There was a fandom before we had Guests and there will be a fandom without Guests.

I vowed when I came into B7 fandom after my DW experiences, that I would never again suffer in silence!

We've given you, the FANS, the facts as we know them. You have the proposals and the realities set out for you.

Remember, money to Fan Cons goes primarily into the Con and to a charity. Damn few Fan Cons make a profit.

If the proposed "Pro" Cons come about you will be giving your money to a group of people who are virtually sneering at Fans.

It's your choice.

I've been informed that Fan Con organizers may be approached by Lois Indelicato who will be speaking for Laurie Cohen.

Rules for the FA: all letters will be in this font, with name and city of writer in ALL CAPS. Editorials will be in *italics*.

No personal attacks will be accepted. Personal attacks should be taken to mean no fan feuds, fan dirt, rumor, or unfounded accusations with names attached. Innuendo is in the eye of the beholder and that's where my editorial decisions WILL stand.

Please try to limit your letters to two pages single-space typing or two pages front and back handwritten. I will TRY to print all of all letters eventually. I generally print by DATE, oldest first, but start an FA with several recent LOCs for continuity. Anything over two pages will be edited by having self-contained paragraphs removed which I will save for a later FA but I won't guarantee they will make it to a published page.

Please put your whole name and address somewhere on the letter page - envelopes get lost.

And now to the fannish stuff for which we subscribe to this chaos.